

REMARKS

The Office Action dated January 21, 2011, has been received and carefully reviewed. The preceding amendments and the following response forms a full and complete response thereto. Claims 29, 32 and 54 are amended to include the features of the additional plastic layer, which is removable by hand. Claim 55 is new and is directed to the feature that the additional plastic layer is directly on top of the metal layer (i.e., contacts). Support for the amendments can be found, inter alia, page 7 of the specification. No new matter is added. Claims 33-36 and 52-53 have been amended as to form only. Claims 19-28, 37-38 and 41-46 are currently withdrawn. Claims 1-18 were previously cancelled and claims 19-54 are pending in the application, for which reconsideration is requested.

Applicant's representative thanks Examiners Rolland and Cleveland for taking to time to meet with him on April 18, 2011. In accordance with the discussions held on that day, the independent claims have been amended to include a step of adding a releasable top layer – an “additional plastic layer” – which can be removed by hand. As is explained in further detail below, the combination of art does not suggest this feature and, in fact, teaches against this feature.

An objection was made to claim 32 on the ground that “in such a way” was viewed to be confusing. The pertinent features of claim 32 have been deleted therefrom

and added to claims 29 and 54. "In such a way" has been removed. Therefore, the objection is moot and should be withdrawn.

Claims 29 was rejected as allegedly being indefinite on the ground that the terms "thin" and "dimensionally stable" were viewed as being unclear. Although the Applicant disagrees, in order to advance prosecution, these terms have been removed by amendment. Accordingly, Applicant submits that the rejection is moot and must be withdrawn.

Claims 31 was rejected as allegedly being indefinite on the ground that the terms "like" and "dimensionally stable" were viewed as being unclear. Although the Applicant disagrees, in order to advance prosecution, this term has been removed by amendment. Accordingly, Applicant submits that the rejection is moot and must be withdrawn.

Claims 47 was rejected as allegedly being indefinite on the ground that the terms it is inconsistent with claim 29, upon which it depends. Claim 29 no longer recites that the reinforcement layer "consists" of plastic and therefore, the rejection is moot and should be withdrawn.

Claim 54 was rejected as allegedly being indefinite on the ground that the terms

“thin” and “dimensionally stable” were viewed as being unclear; and because a step of applying the reinforcement layer has been omitted. Although the Applicant disagrees, in order to advance prosecution, the first two terms have been removed by amendment and the application step has been added. Accordingly, Applicant submits that the rejection is moot and must be withdrawn.

Claims 29, 33-34, 39-40, 49-51 and 54 were rejected under 35 USC § 103(a) as being allegedly unpatentable as obvious over Kaplan (US Patent No. 2,850,999) in view of Levendusky (US Patent No. 5,919,517). The Applicant respectfully traverses the rejection and submits that claims 29, 33-34, 39-40, 49-51 and 54 recite subject matter that is not rendered obvious by the combination of Kaplan and Levendusky.

The rejection is improper for at least two reasons. First, as noted above, claims 29 and 54 have been amended to include the step of releasably fixing an additional plastic layer to the upper face of the metal strip. As described at page 7 of the specification, an upper protective layer 16 can be provided to protect the metal layer and which can be loosely fitted to the upper face of the metal lay so that it may be easily pulled off by hand, i.e., without the need for a tool. This layer protects the metal layer from mechanical damage during the production process. For example, a metal trim unit for a car may be manufactured by the claimed invention to include this additional plastic layer, which can be removed by hand without a tool after the trim piece has been glued to the car. Neither Kaplan and Levendusky teach that a protective plastic layer can be

provided as claimed in claims 29 and 54. In fact, both references teach away from using a loosely fitted layer that is releasable by hand. For example, Kaplan discloses that the problem in the art that he was trying to cure related to coatings that tended to separate from the metal sheet upon bending or subsequent treatment of the sheet. See, e.g., column 2, lines 26-64. Kaplan's invention provides "substantially better adherence between the coating and the metal." Column 4, lines 53-54. The coating of Kaplan is not intended to be removed at all and therefore, Kaplan teaches away from providing a removable additional plastic layer. Levendusky suffers from the same problem as Kaplan. Levendusky teaches that a "process is desired for producing tight adhesion or welding of the polymer to the strip so that the polymer will not delaminate during subsequent forming of the strip or use of the products produced from the strip." Column 1, lines 63-67. Thus neither reference teaches or suggests the claimed additional plastic layer. Although the Office Action cites to Van Rheenen for providing a removable layer of some sort, its teaches are entirely incompatible with the Kaplan / Levendusky combination and in Kaplan and Levendusky teach away from Van Rheenen. Moreover, the if one were to modify Levendusky or Kaplan with Van Rheenan, the resulting product would no longer work as required by Kaplan and Levendusky. For this first, independent reason, the rejection is improper and must be withdrawn.

Second, there is no rational basis to even combine Kaplan and Levendusky. Kaplan is directed to the treatment of coated metal sheets which may be used for

decorative purposes. Levendusky is directed to a method for extrusion coating a metal strip. Kaplan does not disclose a thin metal strip which is embossed and then coated. Rather, Kaplan discloses a metal strip which is coated first and then embossed. Coating the metal strip in this way provides the advantage of "substantially better adherence between the coating and the metal" (column 4, lines 53-55). Therefore, Kaplan teaches away from coating after embossing, which is what the Office Action proposes to do by applying the process of Levendusky to Kaplan. Thus, for this second, independent reason, the rejection is improper and must be withdrawn.

Accordingly, Applicant requests that the rejection to claims 29, 33-34, 39-40, 49-51 and 54 be withdrawn and that these claims be allowed.

Claims 31 and 35 were rejected under 35 USC § 103(a) as being allegedly unpatentable as obvious over Kaplan in view of Levendusky and further in view of Goldsworthy and Waffner. Applicant traverses this rejection because none of these other references remedy the above-described deficiencies of Kaplan and Levendusky. Accordingly, Applicant requests that the rejection to claims 31 and 35 be withdrawn and that these claims be allowed.

Claim 32 was rejected under 35 USC § 103(a) as being allegedly unpatentable as obvious over Kaplan in view of Levendusky and further in view of Goldsworthy and Van Rheenen. This rejection is now moot. Claims 29 and 54 include the features

regarding the additional plastic layer and, as described above, are patentable over the cited prior art. Claim 32 is further patentable because it adds to claim 29 that the reinforcement layer and the additional plastic layer are extrusion-coated onto the metal strip. Accordingly, Applicant requests that the rejection to claims 32 be withdrawn and that these claims be allowed.

Claims 36, and 52-53 were rejected under 35 USC § 103(a) as being allegedly unpatentable as obvious over Kaplan in view of Levendusky and further in view of Goldsworthy and Waffner, in further view of Pannier. Applicant traverses this rejection because none of these other references remedy the above-described deficiencies of Kaplan and Levendusky. Accordingly, Applicant requests that the rejection to claims 36, and 52-53 be withdrawn and that these claims be allowed.

Claims 47-48 were rejected under 35 USC § 103(a) as being allegedly unpatentable as obvious over Kaplan in view of Levendusky and further in view of Goldsworthy. Applicant traverses this rejection because none of these other references remedy the above-described deficiencies of Kaplan and Levendusky. Accordingly, Applicant requests that the rejection to claims 47-48 be withdrawn and that these claims be allowed.

In view of the above, all objections and rejections have been sufficiently

addressed. The Applicant submits that the application is now in condition for allowance and request that claims 29-36, 39-40, and 47-55 be allowed and this application passed to issue.

In the event that this paper is not timely filed, the Applicant respectfully petition for an appropriate extension of time. Any fees for such an extension together with any additional fees may be charged to Counsel's Deposit Account No. 02-2135.

If for any reason the Examiner determines that the application is not now in condition for allowance, it is respectfully requested that the Examiner contact, by telephone, the Applicant's undersigned attorney at the indicated telephone number to arrange for an interview to expedite the disposition of this application.

Respectfully submitted,

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Date

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